

GREAT MASSINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Village Hall on Monday 19th May, 2025, at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors K Hobart (Chair, Parish Council), A Brun, K Frazer, P Harries, P James, O Locke, S Nash, M West and the Clerk to the Parish Council, Sarah Harvey.
Borough Councillor A Beales (from 7.20pm)
Member of Public: 12

The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Parish Council, Councillor K Hobart.

1. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and apologies were noted from Parish Councillor R Arbenz.
2. **Declarations of Interest by Councillors:** None.
3. **Minutes:** The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on May 13th, 2024, copies of which had been circulated were approved and signed by the Chair.
4. **To receive reports the Parish Council Chair's Report:** Councillor K Hobart presented the annual report on behalf of the Parish Council.

'As I am at the end of my first year as Chair of the Parish Council for Great Massingham I can reflect on some notable achievements and some ongoing challenges.

Over the year we have seen some changes to the members of the council, and we welcome our newcomers and thank those who have left for their time and efforts.

We have discussed a very wide range of topics over the year and have formed some subgroups so that these can be more effectively discussed and implemented. These include the playground subgroup - repairs and refurbishment, biodiversity subgroup, and The Mallard which is our thriving village newsletter. This is now managed by the Parish Council.

Many parishioners might not know that the Parish Council have to pay for all the maintenance and electrical supply to the street lighting in the village and this has been a challenge this year as old equipment needs to be replaced. This is an ongoing/permanent project, one which we need to consider the recent survey outcomes.

We are extremely lucky to live in such a beautiful village and to that the new grass cutting contractor, appointed last year, are doing a great job of keeping our village greens looking pristine.

We also have many volunteer groups in the village including the Biodiversity project and the Friends of Scotsman's Pit who have done an amazing job of stabilizing the banks of the pit with coir rolls and planting to try and stop the erosion. Other volunteer groups I need to mention are the community cars who help those who don't have transport to get to the places they need to be. Also, the Community Speed Watch team who help to keep the village safe by monitoring speeds. I would also like to thank the NDP volunteers for their ongoing work and progress – this is a long-term project that will benefit us all.

The Parish Council continues to make donations to voluntary and community groups within the village.

As you may know, our greens and ponds are actually owned by Houghton Hall, and we have a commitment from them to install further reinforcements to this pit due at the beginning of June 2025.

Some other notable achievements in the past year include:

- Repair of the allotment road which has been a great success
- New village noticeboard
- Additional SAM2 mobile speed camera

- Lynn Lane will have new village gates and a SAM2 location post so that the speeds of traffic can be monitored
- Abbey Road path was repaired by highways
- Pothole repairs by highways
- White lines on the road have been redone
- Additional litter bins and dog bins
- We had a great Christmas Carol sing song at The Dabbling Duck with the new Christmas lights project ongoing
- D Day beacon lighting celebration & VE day celebration
- We will be supporting the village hall with their plans for a MUGA
- Supporting Classics on the Green
- Plus the annual Fair & Rides on the Village Green

There have been some more controversial topics during the year which we have tried to navigate, taking into account the views of as many residents as possible. The survey of parking in the village was carried out at the end of 2024 and prompted some interesting outcomes for future discussion. As part of this the Dabbling Duck have applied for further planning permission for their overflow car park and the decision is pending.

Finally, can I take this opportunity to thank my fellow councilors for their hard work and especially our clerk for her patience and professionalism. We have an interesting year ahead with the local council's devolution plans so let's see where that takes us.'

5. **To receive other reports from community representatives and organisations**

5.1 County Councillor's Report: no report was received.

5.2 Borough Councillor's Report: Borough Councillor A Beales provided his annual report on the activities of the Borough Council during 2024/25 via email, and this was read on his behalf.

'I have been Leader of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk for almost exactly a year. I have prepared a short report on some of the most important events during that year.

Appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer and new Executive Leadership Team – there have only been two previous CEOs in the previous 20 years or so, and both were internal appointments. Our now CEO, Kate Blakemore is an external appointment and has experience working in a number of councils. Kate's primary tasks were to address the looming financial black hole the council was facing and reviewing and updating the organisation. With other senior managers also retiring, Kate has appointed a new Executive Team (with councillor input).

Review and updating of the organisation – prior to taking on the leadership, I had spent little time looking at the internal processes of the council and how it deals with our community. That has changed and I have tasked Kate our CEO, with reviewing and renewal of council process, some of which could politely be described as traditional.

Alive West Norfolk back in council control. The four leisure and health and wellbeing centres owned by the council were previously run by Alive West Norfolk, a wholly owned but independent and arm's length company. The facilities are in need of modernization and being back in the council makes that easier and has also streamlined administration and management. A multi million pound rebuild and upgrade is under consideration.

Local Plan adopted. This is hugely significant and means development will be guided by local policy as informed by consultation with the community including PC's. Without it, development would be unconstrained by local knowledge and policy.

The Borough has become a Marmot Place – an important and widely respected health initiative developed by Professor Michael Marmot that firstly researches the health issues faced by our community and then suggests policy and protocol that encourages and enables more effective working between public bodies with greater benefit to public health.

Council finances restored – the projected £4 million deficit for this year has been turned around and a £2 million surplus is anticipated. This £6 million swing is something I am very proud of, but more importantly, it means the council can continue to deliver services to the community without running out of money. That was certain to happen had action not been taken.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Devolution was a possibility very early in my leadership as the Labour Party manifesto promised it if they won the 4th July 2024 General Election. Devolution alone would have meant a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk overseeing the county and district councils which would have remained in place. As it turned out, the victorious Labour Party introduced LGR in tandem meaning the abolition of county and district councils and replacement with unitary councils which deliver all the services previously split between county and district. This is the first such reorganisation for over 50 years and debate rages over the best unitary structure for Norfolk. One vast unitary covering the entire 2,000 square miles of Norfolk with all decisions made in Norwich or a number of smaller unitary authorities more representative of and relevant to local communities. I am in a group of six Norfolk council leaders advocating three unitary councils. One in the West centred on King's Lynn, one in the East centred on Great Yarmouth and a Greater Norwich unitary centred on the City. Final submissions to Govt. are due on 26th September and we should know what unitary structure Govt wants in Norfolk late this year/early next.

In terms of the parish, I have tried to attend every Parish Council meeting I can and have striven to represent your concerns at Planning Committee and help you address problems however I can. I was aware that leadership would make that somewhat more difficult but had no inkling of the huge demands on my time and resources of Local Government Reorganisation. So, I apologise if I have not been able to attend as regularly as I would like, but I very much enjoy working with you and hope you have a good Annual Meeting.'

5.3 Other Reports;

5.3.1 Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group's Annual Report: Jess Cunningham (Chair, Steering Group) presented the annual report on the activities of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group during 2024/25.

During the past year, much work has taken place and activity continues towards the development of a draft Neighbour Development Plan supported by a range of external organisations and the local community through its Steering Group and other volunteers. Key activities and events during 2024/25 include:

Funding – the Steering Group once again received a grant from the government to support activities. It covered all costs for the financial year, spend was approximately £900, covering items such as consultancy support, room hire, printing, refreshments and website hosting.

Local and national planning – There has been much activity both nationally and locally regarding planning, and steering group members have been keeping a close eye on these events to ensure activities of the NDP don't duplicate existing policy. The local plan for the Borough Council for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk has now been adopted.

Community Conversations - Starting in Oct with an update and review of the results so far and a discussion regarding Housing. A number of community conversations have been held to explore topics such as the Development Boundary and Employment Land. In March we had a 'Walkabout' to consider the views around the village (further discussions on Views to take place on 2 nd June).

Specialist work - A number of key areas of work were also undertaken by community members to feed into the process which included work on Green Spaces and Heritage sites. All important aspects for consideration in the final document.

The DRAFT document – Work has started to draft the Neighbourhood Plan document, which will bring all the information gathered so far into a cohesive DRAFT document for consideration by the community.

NDP Volunteers and Supporters - NDP Steering Group include: Jess Cunningham, Gary Alexander, Clare Carroll, Peter James, Phil Ward and Jon Cole. Supported by a number of key volunteers supporting with aspects such as the website, information gathering, technical advice and much more.

Wider activities – The work of the NDP and information collected during community consultations/activities have also informed other community activities e.g. car parking survey.

The Year Ahead, we will continue following the process of developing the draft document and should funding become available again from the government, we will apply for it to support the work as we move through the process.

6. Parishioners Question Time

Cllr S Nash remarked that a microphone was needed for meetings to allow parishioners to hear effectively. Cllr P James agreed to raise both the suggestions of a hearing loop and multi directional microphone at the next Village Hall Trustees meeting.

Cllr K Hobart advised that as Chair he had been invited to attend an engagement event with Norfolk County Council on the 20th May regarding Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

A parishioner raised concerns regarding the slow progress of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, the minimal amount of community engagement, as well as a lack of meeting records and updates to both the NDP website and Facebook Page. The parishioner suggested that the Chair of the NDP Steering Group required more support in her role.

Cllr K Hobart would meet with the Chair of the NDP Steering Group to discuss how the group could be better supported in order to help progress the NDP.

Cllr K Frazer commented that she felt the Parish Council continued to be kept suitably informed through monthly updates received at PC meetings.

A parishioner asked for a general overview of the finance related to The Mallard and the Parish Council. The Clerk advised that financial information was publicly available and could be accessed via the Parish Council website.

A parishioner enquired about progress relating to the boundary adjacent to 24 Weasenham Road. It was noted that an update was to be received during the course of the Parish Council meeting.

With no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.40pm.

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Chair, Mr K Hobart